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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8520
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 4095
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1498
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ SEP 5293
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 9818
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 0002
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 0001
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 001350

SIPDIS

STATE ALSO FOR PM/WRA (YESCALANTE AND ETRIMAKAS)
SOUTHCOMM FOR JMATOS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KHDP](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [EC](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: PERU RESUMES HUMANITARIAN DEMINING

REF: 08 LIMA 01732

Classified By: Ambassador P. Michael McKinley for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Overcoming past shortcomings and deserved skepticism, Peru recently resumed humanitarian demining (HD) operations in parts of its shared border with Ecuador and at other sites within its territory. Senior GOP officials expressed gratitude for the USG's "crucial" assistance, and highlighted HD's continued relevance to the 1998 Brasilia Peace Accord and Peru's steadily improving ties with Ecuador. MFA officials have told us that demining could become an important GOP 'deliverable' at roundtable talks with the restive Amazon indigenous whose lands are affected by mines. The next challenge is to make Peru's mine action program sustainable, so that it can meet its Ottawa Convention obligations and make the country mine-free. End Summary.

Mine Threat

¶2. (U) More than 400 persons have been killed or injured in Peru by various types of anti-personnel landmines, according to local authorities. Mines were first implanted in the 1980s to protect high-tension electricity towers and power plants from attacks by Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso - SL) and Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) guerrillas. In 1993-96, mines were buried around three maximum security prisons to dissuade escapes, and around police anti-narcotic bases as a defensive measure. Sections of Peru's common border with Ecuador remain affected by landmines, explosive remnants of war and unexploded ordnance as a result of the 1995 "Cenepa conflict with Ecuador. A new mine threat has emerged in the drug-producing Apurimac-Ene River Valley (VRAE) as SL regularly employs homemade improvised explosive devices and booby traps against the GOP's security forces.

Overcoming the Past

¶3. (C) Since HD efforts began in 2000, Peru's uneven performance caused some donors to question its seriousness and commitment to a Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) program. GOP officials tended to blame slow progress on the costly logistics of operating helicopters in the remote and rugged mountain jungle, and on other competing defense needs, such as the campaign against SL in the VRAE. USG assistance practically ceased in 2006, until the GOP presented the

Embassy with a formal request for assistance in 2007. PM/WRA responded in 2008 with \$200k for equipment and a preliminary contractor assessment. In 2008, 767 mines were destroyed. In 2009, almost no mine work was done until two technical consultants began to advise the MFA, army and police, while USSOUTHCOM provided much-needed training and classroom equipment to the Peruvian army (EP) engineers at the demining school in Bagua. Results thus far have been auspicious: EP engineers destroyed their first mines at Chiqueiza near the border on August 26-27 and on September 7, police deminers began mine sweeping around Castro Castro maximum security prison in Lima. (Note: Approximately 40 pct of the facility's roughly 1,240 inmates are SL. End note.)

Political Significance

¶4. (C) Humanitarian demining is expected to again top the agenda when the presidents and cabinets of Peru and Ecuador meet in Piura next October to mark the anniversary of the Brasilia Peace Accords that put an end to decades of hostilities between the two countries. MFA officials have told us that Peru places a premium on cementing its ties with Ecuador, particularly since tensions have increased with its southern neighbors of Chile and Bolivia. (Comment: On September 9, VMOD Jose Antonio Bellina told the DCM that Peru was also an important intermediary "hinge" in patching up the relations between Ecuador and Colombia. End Comment.) MFA officials have also told us that the long overdue demining in the remote Amazon basin is a deliverable to the Shuar-Huampis indigenous people who were involved in the June 5, 2009 violence in Bagua that left 24 policemen and 10 natives dead. One leader from the indigenous organization AIDSEP, told Poloff that many Shuar served as uncompensated scouts for the Peruvian military during the 1995 conflict with Ecuador and are angry that their territory is still contaminated by explosive remnants of war.

Other Benefits Possible

¶5. (C) Peru's Mine Action Center (CONTRAMINAS) is headquartered at the MFA. Its head, Minister Counselor Vitaliano Gallardo recently thanked Emboffs for State Department's and SOUTHCOM's assistance. He observed that the resumption of humanitarian demining is likely to generate good will towards the U.S., improve the security of Peruvians and Ecuadorians, reinforce positive Peru-Ecuador bilateral relations and enhance regional stability. Another official implied that success on demining could have a beneficial impact on Peru's participation in future international peacekeeping operations (PKO). Gallardo said that the MFA intended to showcase Peru's demining progress by soon inviting senior foreign diplomats to tour installations and possibly visit minefields.

Road Ahead

¶6. (C) Restarting demining operations should help to dispel past pessimism and attract future donor support. In the meantime, Embassy expects that continued NADR funding will be needed for us to remain engaged in Peru's HMA program over the next 2-3 years. The priority objective is to strengthen CONTRAMINAS' capacity for civilian oversight through continued contractor support. Training and logistical support for the specialized army (DIGEDEHUME) and (DIVSECOM) police units are also needed. The plan is for the police to finish its work within one year and then deploy to the border to assist the army. Other contemplated areas of cooperation include victims' assistance, infrastructure improvements for the demining school in Bagua and mine-sniffing dogs. Peru has 28 minefields that contain an estimated 28,000 anti-personnel mines -- not including the politically-sensitive and heavily contaminated one km sq. Ecuadorian battle monument of Tiwintza, located inside Peruvian territory. (Note: CONTRAMINAS' officials have told us that they are concerned that Tiwintza could one day be politically exploited by nationalists in the same way as was the case on Peru's maritime claim with Chile. End note.)

Comment:

¶7. (C) Peru adheres to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel and on Their Destruction ("The Ottawa Convention"). Convention authorities in Geneva have given Peru an eight-year extension to rid the country of mines by ¶2017. Embassy believes that Peru can make or beat this deadline by 2-3 years if it continues to stay the course and attract further donor support. The resumption of demining is good news on many levels, and it could not have been accomplished without the commendable dedication of PM/WRA's Edmund Trimakas, MAAG's LTC Rene Rodriguez and Ronco consultant Stewart "Sandy" Powell. End Comment.
MCKINLEY